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June 24, 2003

The Honorable Earl Pomeroy
1110 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 25015-3401

Dear Representative Pomeroy:

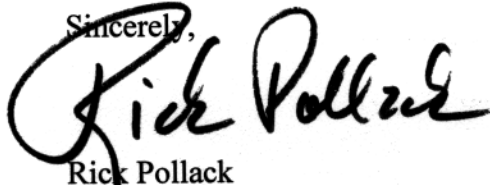
On behalf of the American Hospital Association's (AHA) more than 5,000 member hospitals, health care systems, networks, and other providers of care, we are writing to thank you for your outstanding leadership on behalf of America's rural hospitals.

Year in and year out you have been a tireless advocate of ensuring that rural communities have access to the high-quality health care services they need.

This dedication is reflected in your recent success during consideration of the "Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003" in the Ways & Means Committee. Your amendment to that legislation addresses important concerns relating to the Medicare Area Wage Index (AWI) and will enable rural hospitals to pay competitive wages to attract and retain quality health care personnel. By lowering the labor-related portion of the base payment amount to which the AWI is applied, and by holding other hospitals harmless, your amendment ensures a more accurate reflection of current labor costs. Your amendment will help ensure access to quality care for all North Dakotans and rural citizens across the country.

Again, thank you for your leadership on behalf of rural hospitals. We look forward to working with you as this process moves forward.

Sincerely,



Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President